

Editorial: Moving out of State Can't Be The Only Option, We must Save Michigan's Children with Autism.

Michigan is currently ranked in the top ten worst places to live for children with Autism. Today, the best option for families to get help is to move out of State where Autism is covered by insurance.

Autism is a severe disorder of neural development and impacts 1 in 110 children with another 1,000 children born in Michigan each year. There is no known cause or cure

Few of Michigan's children with Autism have a chance. Autism can be identified by age two and there are proven therapies that can mitigate the symptoms. Half the kids can make so much progress with they achieve normal function, are mainstreamed in school and can go on to lead independent lives and become a taxpayer.

Without insurance there is little chance of improvement because without coverage, there are virtually no certified therapists in behavior therapy, the most important therapy. Michigan has 30 certified behavior therapists working with 15,000 children with Autism while Florida has thousands.

The "free market system" is in a deep freeze on this one. Without insurance we have systematically denied access. In many cases the only choice parents have to get help is to move to a State that provides coverage.

Michigan has to choose. We must do the right thing and stand by our children.

In addition this will save a lot of money. The lifetime cost of a untreated person with Autism is \$3.7 million, mostly in around the clock adult care. With access to therapies, the average cost is cut in half. This will result in \$14 billion in savings to Michigan. Of that amount, \$1.5 billion will be savings to the schools. The high costs of not helping these kids is in our taxes today.

Michigan can't afford to waste billions of dollars, force families to choose between bankruptcy or leaving the State. Those who oppose these have not come up with one viable option in the six years of Michigan's debate. They propose to let the schools handle this issue. Really? Schools proving medical therapies? Schools should teach.

The Michigan Legislature should move rapidly on Senate Bills 414 and 415. This will save Michigan at least \$14 billion and do what the adults are supposed to do - take care of our children. It is an easy choice. It is Pure Michigan.

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